



News Release

For immediate release: July 10, 2014

(14-096)

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Measles case count in WA up drastically from last year, continuing to spread

OLYMPIA — Washington has had more measles cases so far this year than in the past five years combined. State health officials are sounding the alarm to remind people that vaccination is the best protection against the spread of this serious and preventable disease.

So far in 2014 there have been 27 measles cases in Washington, up from the five reported in 2013. The most recent cases reported in the past month have been in King County (11 confirmed cases) and Pierce County (two confirmed cases). This is the third measles outbreak in our state this year and the number of cases so far is the highest reported in any year since 1996. People can check the [Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department](#) and [Multicare](#) websites for a list of places visited by cases while they were contagious. Anyone who visited places at the listed dates and times should find out if they've been vaccinated for measles or have had the disease.

Washington's trend reflects the national trend. From Jan. 1 to July 3 of this year, the U.S. has experienced, the highest number of cases since elimination of ongoing measles virus circulation in the U.S. was documented in 2000. Almost all of these cases are attributed to 17 outbreaks.

The resurgence is linked to several factors — people not being vaccinated, and the fact that measles is still common in many parts of the world including parts of Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. Travelers with the measles continue to bring the disease to the U.S. and it spreads when it reaches communities where groups of people aren't vaccinated.

Measles is highly contagious even before the rash starts. It spreads easily when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes — if you're not vaccinated, you can get the measles just by walking into a room where someone with the disease has been in the past couple of hours. About one in 10 children with measles also gets an ear infection, and up to one in 20 gets pneumonia. Of every 1000 people with measles, one is likely to get encephalitis, and one or two may die.

— More —

The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is recommended for kids 12 months and older, health care workers, college students, adults born after 1956, and people who travel internationally. Pregnant women should not get the vaccine until after giving birth.

Children should be vaccinated with two doses of MMR vaccine, with the first dose between 12 and 15 months and the second at four to five years of age. Children aged six to 11 months who will be travelling internationally should receive one dose of MMR at least two weeks before departure. Adults should have at least one measles vaccination, with some people needing two. Anyone planning to travel should make sure they are immune to measles before leaving the U.S. Vaccine can be found by calling your health care provider or by checking the [online vaccine finder](#) for a location near you.

People who are unvaccinated, or aren't sure if they're immune, and develop an illness with fever and rash should consult a health care professional immediately. Call ahead to your clinic, doctor's office, or emergency room before arriving to avoid exposing others in waiting rooms.

More information about measles and vaccine can be found by visiting the agency's [immunization web pages](#).

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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